

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-31 (Cancelled).

32. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing D-pantothenic acid and/or a salt thereof, comprising:

culturing a recombinant modified Coryneform bacterium for a time and under conditions suitable for producing D-pantothenic acid or a salt thereof, and

collecting the D-pantothenic acid or a salt thereof;

wherein the pox B gene is deleted in the recombinant modified Coryneform bacterium expresses a reduced level of the poxB gene product, which is a pyruvate oxidase, compared to an unmodified Coryneform bacterium, wherein the poxB gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises SEQ ID NO:1, SEQ ID NO:4, a polynucleotide which hybridizes under stringent conditions to the full complement of SEQ ID NO:1 and which encodes a protein with pyruvate oxidase activity, or a polynucleotide which hybridizes under stringent conditions to the full complement of SEQ ID NO:4 and which encodes a protein with pyruvate oxidase activity, wherein the stringent conditions comprise washing in 5 X SSC at a temperature of 68°C

~~wherein the recombinant modified Coryneform bacterium expresses a poxB gene product having reduced pyruvate oxidase activity compared to the poxB gene product expressed in an unmodified Coryneform bacterium.~~

Claims 33-45 (Cancelled).

46. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein the D-pantothenic acid is concentrated prior to said collecting.

47. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein the D-pantothenic acid is concentrated after said collecting.

48. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, further comprising purifying the D-pantothenic acid and/or a D-pantothenic salt.

49. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein said recombinant modified Coryneform bacteria is *Corynebacterium glutamicum*.

50. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein said recombinant modified *Coryneform* bacterium is selected from the group consisting of *Corynebacterium acteo glutamicum*, *Corynebacterium acetoacidophilum*, *Corynebacterium thermoaminogenes*, *Brevibacterium flavum*, *Brevibacterium lactofermentum*, and *Brevibacterium divaricatum*.

51. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 32, wherein said recombinant modified Coryneform bacterium further comprises ~~an increased amount of the products of one or more of the following genes~~ overexpressed with a strong promoter, wherein the one or more genes are selected from the group consisting of ~~compared to the unmodified Coryneform bacterium:~~ panB which codes for ketopantoate hydroxymethyl transferase, panC which codes for ~~pantothenate~~ pantothenate synthetase, ilvC which codes for acetohydroxy-acid isomeroreductase, and ilvD which codes for dihydroxy-acid dehydratase.

Claim 52 (Cancelled).

53. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein the culturing is in a batch process.

54. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein the culturing is in a fed batch process.

55. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 32, wherein the culturing is in a repeated fed batch process.

56. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 32, wherein said *poxB* gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises a polynucleotide which hybridizes under stringent conditions to ~~a polynucleotide selected from the group consisting of the full complement of SEQ ID NO:1, complement of SEQ ID NO:3, and complement of SEQ ID NO:4~~ and which encodes a protein having reduced pyruvate oxidase activity compared to a protein encoded by SEQ ID NO:1, and wherein said stringent conditions comprise washing in 5X SSC at a temperature ~~from 50 to~~ of 68°C.

57. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim ~~56~~32, wherein said *poxB* gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises SEQ ID NO:1.

58. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim ~~56~~32, wherein said *poxB* gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises SEQ ID NO:4.

59. (New) The process of Claim 32, wherein said *poxB* gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises a polynucleotide which hybridizes under stringent conditions to the full complement of SEQ ID NO:4, wherein said stringent conditions comprise washing in 5X SSC at a temperature of 68°C.

60. (New) The process of Claim 32, wherein said *poxB* gene in the Coryneform bacterium prior to being deleted comprises a polynucleotide encoding a protein comprising the amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2.